

Searching for a Just Peace in Darfur: Reconciliation & Exposure to Violence

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How does personal exposure to violence influence punitive attitudes among Darfuri refugees?

- Specifically, do those personally victimized favor executions of perpetrators more than those who were not victimized? Or do they shy away from punitive responses to violence?

Map of Darfur, Sudan in 2004



BACKGROUND

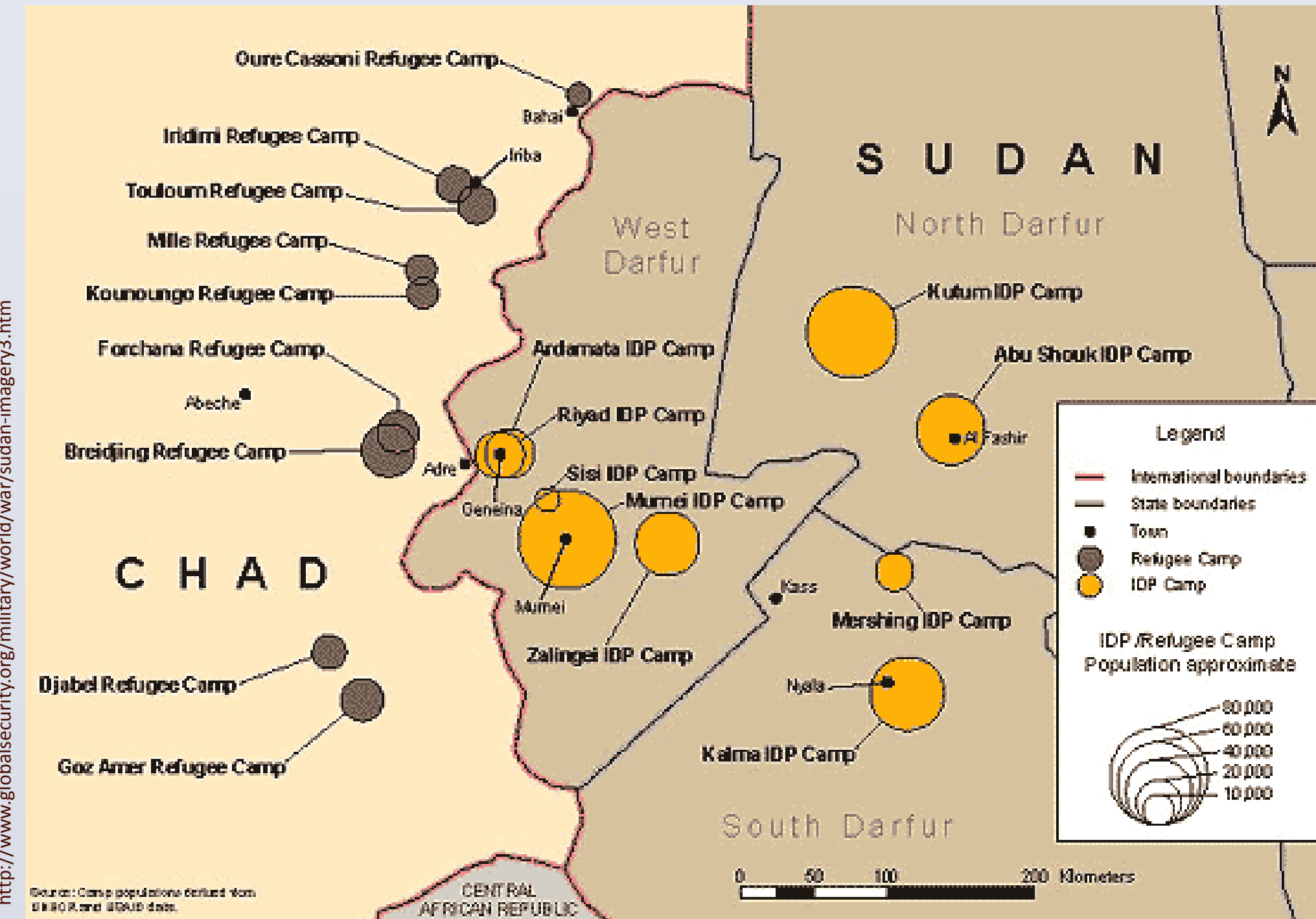
In February 2003, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) accused the Sudanese government of neglecting the non-Arab peoples within their nation and launched an attack against the Sudanese government in Darfur, the western region of Sudan. In response, the government armed and trained a mostly Arab militia known as the Janjaweed who used both aerial and ground bombardments in conjunction with the Sudanese government to indiscriminately attack men and women of all ages in villages that were allegedly sympathetic to the rebel groups' cause. Decade-long violence continues between the government and rebel groups, resulting in hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths and even more displaced persons.

To resolve this conflict, it is important to consider punishment of the perpetrators, but little is known about how exposure to violence influences Darfuri's opinions of perpetrator punishment. The Darfuri peoples' opinions could have important consequences for transitional justice within Darfur.

SAMPLE

This research drew upon survey data from the nongovernmental organization 24 Hours for Darfur. Over the course of 2008 and 2009, 24 Hours interviewed a random sample of approximately 2,200 adult refugees across 12 different refugee camps in eastern Chad with the expressed goal of learning the perceived necessary conditions for a just peace in Darfur. As such, the sample is representative of the Darfuri adult population of the camps surveyed in eastern Chad.

9 of 12 Refugee Camps Surveyed by 24 Hours



METHODS

Dependent Variables

- Support execution of Janjaweed personnel (78.9%)
- Janjaweed commanders
 - Janjaweed soldiers
- Support execution of government actors (78.2%)
- Sudanese government officials
 - Sudanese government army commanders
 - Sudanese government soldiers
- Key Independent Variable
- Being personally maimed in the conflict in Darfur (36.2%)

Control Variables

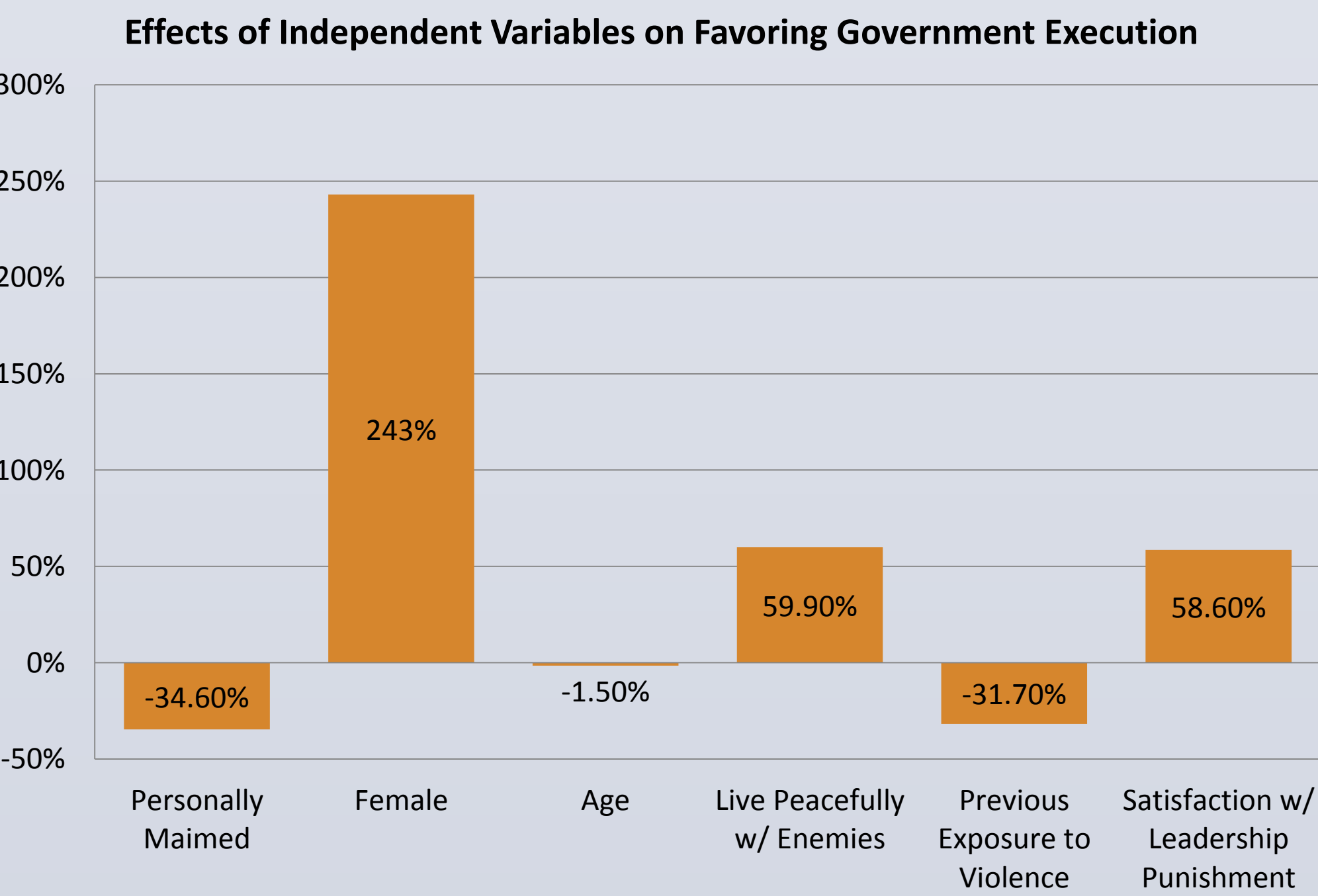
To control for other factors that could influence opinions of punishments, I also include age, sex, marital status, education, whether participants have voted, whether they believe that they can live peacefully with former enemies, whether they had previously been exposed to extreme violence, and whether they would be satisfied if only key leaders were punished.

Analysis

I use logistic regression, which is a form of quantitative analysis that isolates the effect of the key independent variable—being personally maimed—while taking into account other factors that could influence the relationship between being maimed and views of punishment.

RESULTS

For both the government and Janjaweed actors, analyses show that people that are personally maimed are less likely to want punitive punishments like executions. All else constant, victims were 34.6% less likely to want these punitive punishments for government actors and 26.4% less likely to want these punitive punishments for Janjaweed actors.



Note: Education, marital status, whether respondents voted, and whether they believe reconciliation was possible was included in models but is not shown above.

The figure above shows some of the other factors that influence opinions in favor of government execution as an example. As seen in the figure, each increase in one year in age is associated with a 1.5 % decrease in the odds of favoring execution of government officials.

IMPLICATIONS

Those who were personally maimed are less likely to favor punitive punishments like execution and there are several potential implications from these preliminary results. First, those personally victimized may be less likely to prefer punitive punishments like executions because they are weary of continued violence. Since they have experienced extreme violence firsthand, they may want more conciliatory punishments to put an end to the violence for all people, even those responsible for the violence. Those personally victimized in the conflict may also be afraid of retaliation from perpetrators or enemy groups. They may believe that the former Sudanese and Janjaweed personnel will seek revenge for the execution of their members, thereby influencing how likely they are to prefer punitive punishments. Regardless, better understanding how personal victimization influences attitudes about punishment is important for understanding the conflict as a whole.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This research will contribute to a larger research thesis that I will defend next autumn. Using this research as a foundation, I will explore different measures of exposure to violence, such as the number of respondents' family members killed in the conflict, to see how this relates to their thoughts on punishment. I will also add to the types of punishments being studied, expanding from execution to other punishments like imprisonment and fines. Finally, I will be sharing my results with 24 Hours for Darfur and other related NGOs so that they may have policy-relevant impacts.

REFERENCES

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